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YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

VOLUME XXXVI - NUMBER 9

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SEPTEMBER 1957



Ranger patrol at Rogers Lake.

—Anderson

MISSION 66

What it is.—MISSION 66 is a conservation program for the National Park System and all other areas managed by the National Park Service.

Conservation is generally defined as wise use; this 10-year program is intended so to develop and staff these priceless possessions of the American people as to permit their wisest possible use; maximum enjoyment for those who use them; and maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, and historic resources that give them distinction.

Construction is, of course, an important element of the program. Modern roads, well-planned trails, utilities, camp and picnic grounds, and many kinds of structures needed for public use or administration, to meet the requirements of an expected 80,000,000 visitors in 1966, are necessary; but they are simply one of the means by which "enjoyment-without-impairment" is to be provided.

What it will do.—MISSION 66 will replace outmoded and inadequate facilities with physical improvements adequate for expected demands but so designed and located as to reduce the impact of public use on valuable and destructible features.

It will provide both facilities and personnel for visitor services of the quality and quantity that the public is entitled to expect in its National Park System. It is intended to assure the fullest possible degree of protection both to visitors and resources.

The reason for its name.—MISSION 66 is a long-range program; it will require at least 10 years to accomplish on a sound and realistic dollar basis. That means completion in 1966—the 50th anniversary year of the establishment of the National Park Service.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Yosemite Nature Notes

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SOME ASPECTS OF MISSION 66

Part I

By Roland Steinmetz, Ranger-Naturalist

Today's visitor to Yosemite, and that matter, the visitor to other National Parks and Monuments, is confronted and sometimes confounded with a sign, "This is a MISSION 66 Project." Recent war terminology and oil company advertisements only further confuse him and finally in desperation he will ask, "What's this MISSION 66 business all about?"

Perhaps it is well that such a provocative name be given this promising project, for thereby is the curiosity aroused, and thence comes the opportunity to explain. The optimistic interpreter will capitalize on this situation to imbue the listener with a bit of National Park Service philosophy as well.

1966 will mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the National Park Service—the year which will see the completion of the MISSION 66 program, a forward-looking program designed to bring the National Park system up to the standards which the American people want and have a right to expect. A discussion of portions of the present situation (the problem) will be presented herewith. In a succeeding article there will appear a pres-

entation of proposed solutions as they will be carried out in MISSION 66.

The Nature of the Problem

Two main difficulties face the Park Service at this writing because of staff or facility shortages. They are (1) inability to take care of the increasing millions of visitors who will be coming in the near future, and (2) inability to protect the irreplaceable features of the areas. The two general problems are closely related, face practically all areas administered by the Park Service, and are nowhere more acute than in Yosemite. Let us examine the facets of the pertinent problems.

The Problem of Inadequate Visitor Use Facilities

In 1855 five visitors toured Yosemite. By 1870 the fame of its beauty had spread and 1735 visitors came that year—enough to bring the first complaint from a lady visitor that the valley was "too crowded." Last year's total reached over 1,113,000, and indications are that 1957 will see even a larger number. There is reason to believe that 1966 will find nearly two million visitors in Yosemite, and even greater numbers thereafter.

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Surveying for new road alignments.

These data are not in themselves shocking to anyone versed in travel trends, but consider the full impact to the Incomparable Valley. *Unless something is done to avoid it*, the large majority of these vast numbers will continue to pour into the seven square miles of the tiny valley itself, seeking accommodations and services which the already crowded and inadequate facilities cannot provide.

Campgrounds are often overcrowded. Hotel rooms and other sleeping quarters are frequently sold out; long lines face the visitor wishing restaurant meals. The number of comfort stations and other sanitary facilities is far below the need. Information and interpretive centers are too localized. Picnic areas and parking turnouts are insufficient in number. Many roads still follow stage-coach alignments; traffic jams exist. The problems are

heightened in periods of peak summer loads. Unquestionably there have been visitors whose memory of their contact with Yosemite has been less than their legitimate expectations—not because the natural beauty wasn't there, but their personal inconvenience infringed upon their enjoying their visit more.

There is no easy answer to the question of how to eliminate these conditions. MISSION 66 planners consider it undesirable to build and develop many *more* visitor accommodations on the valley floor itself. This cannot be done without impairing and ultimately destroying the very qualities for which the park was created. A ceiling of about 8000 campers and 4500 concessioner provided accommodations is considered to be the limit. What then? The answer lies in a master plan involving (1) modification or modernization of present visitor facilities

the valley and maintaining the established ceiling; (2) removal of but absolutely necessary operating facilities from the valley; and development of accommodations, facilities, and services in other sections of the park to relieve over-crowding, but at the same time permit quick and easy access by car to the valley and its renowned scenic structures.

Simple, isn't it? But isolating the general answers to a large problem does not insure accomplishment of solution. Myriads of other problems present themselves, including one more which will be treated here.

The Road and Trail System

Transportation looms as a big factor in carrying out the proposals suggested. The park's road and trail system has never been completed. Portions of Big Oak Flat Road and the

Tioga Road, built to stagecoach standards of the 1870's and 1880's, have been little improved since. Consequently, visitors from the north and the east have been handicapped, but even more seriously, a definite imbalance of visitor load and overall park development has occurred. Nearly four-fifths of the entries come through South Entrance and Arch Rock Entrance, both terminal points of good state roads leading to the park. It is not difficult to conceive why areas easily accessible to these roads have received most attention and development, leaving other areas largely unused.

Privately Owned Lands Within The Park

The casual visitor does not ordinarily realize that in many National Parks, including Yosemite, there exist privately-owned lands, some tastefully developed, some below the

Roads built for these cars are still in use.

—Anderson





Various types of homes are found on private lands.

—Schwartz

standards of the surroundings. In any case, private holdings within National Parks are not compatible with public use.

Yosemite-contained private lands are in many cases located in the most desirable places left for possible development of visitor-use facilities outside Yosemite Valley. They stand in the way until acquired by the government, are often divided into small plots which make acquisition procedures laborious and time-consuming, and up to this time have often been unavailable to the park because of lack of funds with which to purchase them.

The Problem of Protection

Good management and planning insure protection if a reasonable staff is provided. Proof of this is manifested in the evidence of Yosemite Valley's superior beauty today contrasted to its condition at the turn of the century when early visitors found less well-controlled camping and other use of the Valley floor. But today's staff cannot cope with conditions in excess of its handling cap-

abilities. There must be anticipate a greater need for qualified personnel to handle accidents, fight fire interpret, administer, control pla and animal life, and tend to myriad of other duties.

Whereas vandalism and thoughtlessness are general causes of damage to park areas everywhere, several of Yosemite's sacred spots have suffered from the impact of the feet of human beings engaged in altogether legitimate and purposeful activity of enjoyment. Notable among these areas are the Mariposa and Tuolumne groves of giant Sequoia where root damage has already reached severe proportions.

Summary

In brief have been stated some the general problems which face the areas administered by the National Park Service, plus specific problems as they occur in Yosemite. Of interest to all lovers of Yosemite are the proposals by MISSION 66 planners. They will be discussed in a succeeding article.



Many Giant Sequoias have suffered from "human erosion".

—Anderson

MUSIC HATH CHARMS**Carl Sharsmith, Ranger Naturalist**

We were on our way back from an all-day nature hike, twenty-two children and I. The day thus far had been full of interest; indeed, wonderful things of all sorts had been discovered by my group of sharp-eyed eight to ten year olds. But now it was late afternoon; soon we were due on the hilltop where fathers and mothers in their cars would be awaiting our return. The long, forested hill-slope loomed above us. We had hiked and hiked. The afternoon sun had been almost hot. Our legs were getting tired. In this cool, shady spot, before we tackle the steep hill for the last lap, how about a bit of a rest and a ranger's story? And maybe some music?

So there we lay, the children and I. Time passed. I had finished my story. The children remained quiet. I was now playing my sweetest on my old harmonica. The little grassy dell, encircled by its dense thicket of young lodgepole pines, was filled with the strains of music as in a quiet room. Only an occasional sour note, blown from the one off-key reed of my instrument, stirred the children now and then into their delighted little laughs. My eyes were closed; I was completely absorbed in giving them the best renditions of my old favorites: "Tipperary;" "K-k-k-Katy;" "Sobre las Olas," etc., when suddenly I was roused from my reverie. With hushed, yet tense voices the children had cried: "Oh, there's a deer!" Yes, sure enough there was a deer. It was a doe. Bounding across the meadow, toward our thicket she came.



Stock still she stood.

Anticipating possibilities I continued my playing and between breaths hushed the children. In a moment the doe reached our thicket and had abruptly halted. Standing stock-still, she was peering at us through the little trees, moist nostril quivering and ears alerted forward. Watching her through the corners of my eyes, I quickly turned to my most lively airs, almost never stopping to catch my breath. The doe stamped her forefoot; then turned and quick as a flash bounded around to the other side of our encircling thicket. Here she stopped, and sharply peered at us as before. Then, in a streak of bounds, she raced back to her original spot, and stood stock-still and peered at us again. But not for long. Again she dashed around to the other side, halted and peered, then raced back again to halt and peer as before. The children were entranced. I played furiously. My lips were getting sore. The rusty edges of my ancient harmonica hurt, but I dared not stop! Then, from stand as motionless as a statue, she turned, and with graceful leaps bounded away across the meadow to the forest from whence she had come. She was gone! The spell was broken. But the children's eyes were

till sparkling with delight. And I think mine were, too!

Exactly one week later I was with another group of children. We were on the same route of return from another all-day children's nature hike. The afternoon sun was warm as before, and we laid ourselves down for rest in the same little swale. Again I told one of my ranger stories, then turned to my old harmonica. As the trains filled the glen, I inwardly wished but could not believe that our doe would give us a repeat performance. But yes! Here she was again! abruptly as an apparition, head through thicket, eyes gazing, ears cocked forward, and nostrils quivering! And again she bounded about and halted as before - hither and stop, return and stop. Only then to flash away over meadow and disappear from view. Indeed it was a repeat performance!

John Muir in his "Mountains of California" tells of the charm his whistled tunes had for the Douglas squirrel (chickaree). Old packers working with Yosemite's trail crews



I dared not stop.

—Anderson

tell of the charms of musical strains from radio or trumpet upon bears. With respect to our doe's performance there might, on the other hand, be those to suggest it was prompted by concern for fawns possibly hidden in our thicket. But there was no question in our minds. We knew. The children and I are certain it was all because she was charmed by the spell of our music!

. . . a bit of rest and a ranger's story.

—Hubbard



LAST TRIP OF JOHN MUIR TO YOSEMITE (1912)**By William E. Colby**

I was greatly interested in the "Note on John Muir" in the March 1957 issue of *Yosemite Nature Notes*. It is a very readable account of a period in John Muir's life where there is little published information. The writer states that this was "his last trip to Yosemite National Park." While the exact time of year the trip described was taken is not given, it was in 1912 when the "waterfalls" were an object of attraction and presumably it was some time in the summer. However, John Muir took another trip to Yosemite in early October of 1912. As President of the Sierra Club he was invited by Walter Fisher, Secretary of the Interior, to attend a National Park conference, where the superintendents of the parks and the concessionaires were to discuss their problems. The first of these conferences had been held in 1911 in Yellowstone and had proved so desirable and successful that it was repeated in Yosemite in 1912. This was prior to the creation of the National Park Service by Congress and when the Army was called upon to police and administer the National Parks. Major W. W. Forsythe, successor to the very capable Major Benson, was the administrative officer in Yosemite.

As Secretary of the Sierra Club I was also invited to the conference and I had the great good fortune to be with John Muir and share a room



John Muir and Wm. Curtis in Yosemite Valley, 1912.

with him in one of the buildings across the road from the Sentinel Hotel.

The conference, attended by leaders interested in the National Parks, discussed the many park problems of those early days. The major question was whether automobiles should be permitted to enter the National Parks with Yosemite as the critical case. The park superintendents were strongly opposed to letting them in, mainly on account of danger of accident with horse-drawn vehicles on the same roads, which roads were not too safe anyway. The automobile associations and auto users made a strong plea for admission.

John Muir was called on to speak and he made one of his great talks on the importance of parks generally and, to the surprise of many, strongly advocated allowing automobiles to enter them. His reasons were that it was very evident that automobiles would become the exclusive means of transportation entirely superseding equine-drawn vehicles and that the great objective was to get as many people as possible receive the inspiration and spiritual benefit of entering these incomparable mountain temples. Secretary Fisher was impressed and recognized that eventually automobiles could not be kept out, but he remarked dryly "Let's not crowd the mourners."

I was called on to speak for the Sierra Club and had the temerity to open my talk by saying "Mr. Secretary, you would not be sitting in the presiding chair today and this conference would not be held in Yosemite were it not for the work and influence of John Muir and the Sierra Club in bringing about the recession of Yosemite Valley to the federal government."

In the late afternoon, after adjourning for the day, John Muir and I would take walks on the valley floor. It was early October and down the valley the cliffs and forests were bathed in the intense blue and purple light that is characteristic of autumn. We sauntered through the abandoned campgrounds which only two or three months earlier had teemed with campers and noted how quickly "nature heals its wounds" for the forest floor was already covered with pine needles and leaves. John Muir took me down below the little chapel and over to the vertical



John Burroughs visiting John Muir's grave.

granite cliffs which came straight down into the level meadow area, without any talus to conceal the meeting and pointed out that the rib or ridge of granite above deflected the rocks falling from above so as to keep the immediate base free.

I shall always regret that I did not insist on his taking me to the various places that he wrote about and where he lived during the years he spent in the Valley so as to identify them, for with the lapse of time there is now much uncertainty as to just where they were situated.

The article in your March issue concludes with the statement that John Muir was 78 when he died. Actually he was only 76 when he passed away on Christmas eve in 1914.

DRAMA AT DUSK**By David C. Ochsner, Park Ranger**

Coyotes keep watch over McGurk Meadow.

—Anderson

Picture, if you will, a mountain meadow, very moist and carpeted with Sierra shootingstar, elephant-head, camas, cornlily, sedges, and grasses of many varieties. In the center of this meadow a dry island of rocks, shrubs, and small trees protrudes above this verdant carpet. The trout are jumping at insects winging over the deep pools in the meadow stream. Don't forget the clouds of mosquitoes, swarming and buzzing, seemingly intent on draining your last ounce of life blood. In a few moments the alpine glow

bathes the surrounding mountain tops and finally the whole setting is swathed in the silvery light of a full moon as fog rises from the meandering stream.

All is peaceful and serene and, apparently, all life, animal and plant, has folded for a night of rest. Imagine then, the ear-piercing, hair-raising yip and howl of the mountain coyote. Blood runs rather cold and the heart skips a couple of beats at the howls and cries penetrating dusk's solitude. One's mind immediately flashes to the far north and



Shooting star.

es of Jack London, along with mixed emotions of slight trembling fear and bravado. During the month of July such a mood exists in McGurk Meadow near Bridalveil Creek campground.

Coyotes, I learned through one experience, are not always intently walking and prowling in search of food. While quietly fishing one evening in McGurk Meadow my attention was suddenly turned to coyotes by much howling and yipping. Losing all interest in fishing I stealthily crept on the soft grasses to upper McGurk Meadow and there found about eight coyotes indulging in leisure time activities. Just as dogs play and feign anger so were these coyotes, young and old alike, snapping, growling, hovering over and wrestling with each other. Occasionally, a busy brown tail would describe an arc over the tops of the grasses and flowers followed by barking bare teeth and hardy growls. One coyote remained on duty acting as a sentinel, constantly alert for approaching danger. Many times during the summer, coyotes, quietly sitting on the edges of their meadow, had observed my actions but in this instance the tables were turned.

Within a few minutes after concluding their romp, the howls and cries resumed in the deep forest and I can only imagine and surmise about the action that followed. As the sky began to darken and the yelping increased to a feverish pitch, I decided to call it an evening. The trail follows a fire control road between McGurk's broken-down log cabin and the Glacier Point Road. A few hundred feet up the road two does, obviously excited and frightened, raced at breakneck speed across my path amid sounds of crashing in the direction from which they had come. After I crossed the paths of the does a peculiar cry and another crash emanated from the quickly darkening forest. Immediately one doe raced back across the road with neck extended, nostrils dilated and ears pressed to head. Was she returning to a fawn in distress or just confused as to the direction of the crashes? Were the coyotes and possibly a bear fighting over the possession of this doe's fawn? Only the participants will ever know the drama of that moment at McGurk Meadow and I shall forever wonder what motivated the doe to return to the scene of confusion and apparent battle.

Cornlily



EDITOR'S NOTE—Hardly a month goes by that the Yosemite museum does not receive several old photos for inclusion in the historic photo files. It seems a shame to not be sharing these with you readers. Therefore starting with this issue we will run a series of some of the most interesting pictures in our files. Some of the photos have bits of information concerning them on the backs, others have nothing. We will explain the pictures as much as we can. If you readers can add information on a particular illustration we would be glad to hear from you.

Last month *Yosemite Nature Notes* grew from 12 to 16 pages. We hope to continue this larger size in spite of rising production costs. Formerly our printing was done by the letter-press method. Now we have gone to rotary offset, which will allow more illustrations.



OUT OF YOSEMITE'S PAST — A one picture story.
Part of the cast of "Ersa". 1925. Who remembers?

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Sentinel Rock and Merced River in autumn.

—Anderson

